

"The Keepers!"

Text: I Samuel 2:12, & 26,

"Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they knew not the Lord. And the child Samuel, grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men."

Our text for this morning is taken from the reading of the 2nd chapter of I Samuel, the 12th verse and the 26th verse. These verses tell two entirely different stories. I prefer the King James Version for this particular reading.

(Read the verses)

~~Hannah, if you know the preceding story, was unable to have children~~
of
~~xxxxxxwent to the temple~~ Hannah was one of 2 wives ~~that~~ Elkanah. ~~And~~
Peninnah the other wife was able to bear children and she even taunted Hannah because of her sterility. So on the ~~xxxxxx~~ yearly occasion when they went to the Temple in Shiloh Hannah went into the Temple and prayed to God that she would be blessed and have children. She promised God that she would dedicate the Son she was praying for to the service of the Lord. God heard her prayer and granted her a son. She named this Son Samuel, which means, "Name Of God," or, "His Name Is God."

So she took the boy to the Temple in Shiloh at an early age and she left him there under the guidance and direction of the priest Eli. Eli was a good man, but alas his sons were not. They kept the best meat for themselves instead of only taking a portion of the meat and giving the largest part to the worshiper of that which was not burned during the sacrifice. If they did not receive the best part willingly from the worshiper, they took it by force as we read in the scripture. ~~xxxxxxthen told of their~~

But then the author tells us about young Samuel, "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Which is to say that he wore a priestly garment and acted in the capacity as an assistant to the priest Eli.

Samuel's mother Hannah must have been a very good and loving mother, for we are told that each year she made a little coat for him and ^{took} brought

the coat to her son ~~each year~~ when she and ~~her husband~~ ^{KENT} his Father came to the yearly sacrifice. ^{AT SHILOH.}

The scripture tells us that Eli the priest blessed Hannah and Elkanah and pronounced the blessing upon Hannah that she would have more children because of the loan of Samuel to the Lord. And she did indeed have three more sons and two daughters. But the latter part of the 21st verse is the most significant of the entire scripture, "And the child Samuel, grew before the Lord."

In ancient Israel the word "Keeper" had several meanings. But one of the more common meanings was that as a guard over cattle or sheep. Abel was a "Keeper" of sheep as we read in the 4th chapter of Genesis. And I'm sure we all know the story of how Cain killed Abel in a fit of anger. We then read of God coming to Cain and inquiring as to the whereabouts of Abel. ~~The~~ Cain said, "I know not: am I my brothers keeper?"

Thus he was saying, "Am I the guard or the shepherd over my brother? Am I to be expected to look after him and care for him?" When we ponder this we realize of course that this saying has been carried down to us until today it is asked very often by people who are questioning their rightful relationship to people who are strangers to them. So we ask, "Am I my brothers keeper?"

If we apply this within our own families we know that we are our brothers keeper and our sisters keeper as well. But while we are concentrating our thoughts upon families we come today to look at one of the main reasons for families and this is children. Sons and daughters. We have looked at Mothers and Fathers, and now it is time we looked at children as part of the family.

^{LIKE ABOUT PLAY WHEN}
I was reading recently that we are coming back to the old ways of thinking concerning the raising of children. The author of the article pointed out that we had tried a generation or so of Dr. Spock and his

theory of sparing the rod. Most of you will recall of course that Dr. Spock wrote a book putting forth his belief that spanking or punishing a child was all wrong. His theory was that a child should be spoken to and there should never be any physical punishment. Well, his theory has caused some very unhealthy situations in our nation, and from the article I read, he supposedly has withdrawn his theory in favor of certain punishments for children. Unfortunately many people have not seen his public retraction, myself included, if indeed he did make such a retraction. It always bothers me that much sensational distorted news is spread over the front page of many newspapers throughout the nation. But when a retraction is needed because some of this news is incorrect or false, you need a magnifying glass to pick it out of the want-ads, or some other place where it is seldom seen.

~~But~~ ^A another eminent psychiatrist has said, "Children need rules and discipline for emotional health as much as they need bread and butter for physical health." Another man has said, "A child's character cannot be shaped by sudden accident."

Now all of this is to say that we who are parents, bear a grave responsibility in the raising of children. To begin with we do not own our children. They are merely loaned to us by God to raise to be productive people. We never own them any more than we own anything in this life. This then means that we are merely "Keepers" of children. We are in charge of their feeding, clothing, education, development, and all of the other things necessary to raise them to adulthood. This is a grave responsibility and many times ~~xxxxxxx~~ the graveness of the responsibility only dawns upon many parents ~~only~~ after the children have arrived upon the scene, and in some cases the awareness ~~is~~ strikes home when the children are fairly well grown. Sadly too, the awareness of parental responsibility sometimes never manifests itself in the lives of some parents and children are left to almost raise themselves. Needless to say this causes them many problems. Many times in my conversations with people who are either

outside the church or who are occasional church attenders, I am told that when the children reach the age whereby they are able to make decisions, they are then free to choose their own religion and their own church. This is a bad situation to say the least.

(Illustration of poet Coleridge)

~~This is one very good way of solving the problem but~~ The late J. Edgar Hoover ~~also~~ had something to say about this problem.

(Illustration of J. Edgar Hoover)

We as parents cannot afford to let our children choose everything they want to do. If we fed them in this manner, their diet would consist of ice cream and cake. Here then is where ~~xxx~~ the graveness of the situation lies. It does not mean we are to be complete dictators, but it does mean that we are to be shapers and molders of that character ~~xxxx~~ which God has entrusted to our care.

This supervision applies not only in the religious training of children but in the secular aspects of life as well. We are living in a much more permissive society than the one in which many of us were raised. Our children today are faced with many more obstacles and temptations than many of ^{us} had to face. This is due to the fact that our age is much more enlightened, ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and much more open. ~~Everything~~ ~~is much more open and~~ there is much more freedom to make decisions and choices that are both good and bad. So with all of this permissiveness and openness many parents are too busy with their own lives to raise their children properly and the raising of them then becomes the responsibility of society. And with this responsibility comes many problems as well.

(Illustration of disgruntled school teacher, #325 2400 illust.)

Talk with ~~many~~ school teachers, or anyone connecting with our schools and many of them will reiterate what this woman has said. Its sad, but it is true. So it all goes back to the home and what the children are receiving there. If they are instructed how to act and how to behave in

school and in public, then for the most part they will not disappoint their parents.

There are so many other areas of parental responsibility, we could not possibly hope to cover them in one sermon alone.

But ~~there is~~ one final point that needs to be made, and this is directed particularly to all children and young people individually. This does not mean that you parents are to not listen, but for the next few moments I would like to address the young people here this morning.

Perhaps some of what I have said has turned you off. Perhaps much of what I have said you do not particularly agree with. But the biggest hassle all children, young people and parents have today, is in the area of parental authority. Many of us were raised in a home where we were expected to do what our parents said, without any backtalk. But many of us who are parents have decided that we would like our children to have some say so in matters of discipline. But unfortunately, too many young people have taken this as a license to do as they please and to disobey, and when this happens, then Mom and Dad begin to crack the whip and the young people rebel. I believe that all young people should again learn to respect the wisdom of parents which comes with age, and to learn that there are definite reasons for parental decisions. In order to be trusted by parents, you, the young people must ~~behave~~ prove worthy of this trust. This means that if you are expected to be in by 11:00, that you are in by that time. If you are expected to keep your room tidy, or to look after a few chores around the house, that you take care of these things without parental nagging. And if your parents say that there is something they do not want you to do, then you should be man or lady enough to accept their decision without causing World War III.

Now all of this brings us to the point where we realize that parents are "Keepers", and sometimes I am sure they wonder just what they are "Keepers" of. Are they apes? Or are they those wonderful gifts from God

The Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity guarding the paths of justice.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA

RECOGNITION OF SENIORS May 26, 1974

REV. RALPH C. LINK, MINISTER
MRS. VELMA COLLINS, ORGANIST
MR. RALPH COOPER, CHOIR DIRECTOR
GORDON KENNEDY, MARY DELLEN - ACOLYTES

ORDER OF WORSHIP 11:00 A.M.

PRELUDE MUSIC: "SABBATH REVERIE" MARTIN
"WHEN GOD LEADS" CLARKE

SILENT PRAYER

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 446 "NOW IN THE DAYS OF YOUTH"

*ACSCRIPTION - CHORAL AMEN

*EXHORTATION

*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "O LORD OUR GOD, GREAT, ETERNAL, WONDERFUL IN GLORY, WHO KEEPEST COVENANT AND PROMISE FOR THOSE THAT LOVE THEE WITH THEIR WHOLE HEART, WHO ART THE LIFE OF ALL, THE HELP OF THOSE THAT FLEE UNTO THEE, THE HOPE OF THOSE WHO CRY UNTO THEE, CLEANSE US FROM OUR SINS, AND FROM EVERY THOUGHT DISPLEASING TO THY GOODNESS. CLEANSE OUR SOULS AND BODIES, OUR HEARTS AND CONSCIENCES, THAT WITH A PURE HEART AND CLEAR MIND, WITH PERFECT LOVE AND CALM HOPE, WE MAY VENTURE CONFIDENTLY AND FEARLESSLY TO PRAY UNTO THEE. AMEN."

*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)

*ASSURANCE OF PARDON - CHORAL AMEN

*PRAISE

*PASTOR: "O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS

*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE.

*DOXOLOGY No. 551

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 1 SAMUEL 2: 12-26

HYMN No. 447 "Purer yet and purer"

*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (APOSTLES' CREED)

*GLORIA PATRI

*CALL TO PRAYER

*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.

*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT.

*PASTOR: LET US PRAY.

*PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY: "INTERMEZZO IN E"

PEERY

ANTHEM: "AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL"

WARD

SERMON: "THE KEEFERS!"

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 448 "I WOULD BE TRUE"

*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE: "ALLEGRO"

SERGISSON

--- *CONGREGATION STANDING ---

THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY MR. & MRS. JAMES STEWART IN MEMORY OF MRS. ELLA STEWART.

SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE: *RAYMOND COVERT, ROBBIE VINROE, ROBERT DELLEN, BRIAN PFABE, STEVE SMITH. DEACON AND MRS. ROBERT KNAYER WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL. NURSERY WILL BE PROVIDED TODAY BY LINDA McMILLIN, JANE AND LIZ ARMSTRONG.

NO YOUTH FELLOWSHIP MEETING TONIGHT.

OUR CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THOSE GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL, AND COLLEGE. THOSE GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL ARE: DERBY CAMPBELL, WENDY CUSTEAD, CINDY FERREE, JAMES HEATH, NANETTE MARDURGER, TERRY MOHR, SUSAN PALMER, BRENDA PAWK, TRINA RENSEL, SHERRY RENSEL, SHIRLEY RIEMER, GLENDA WEICHEY.

FROM BUTLER CO. COMMUNITY COLLEGE: CHUCK SMITH - SON OF MRS. GERALDINE MCCANDLESS, VALLE JEAN NICHOLAS, PAMELA TAIT, RALPH TAYLOR.

COLLEGE: EDWARD HARMON, MASTERS DEGREE, SECONDARY EDUCATION, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY. KENNETH W. ROBINSON, FROM CALIFORNIA STATE COLLEGE, CALIFORNIA, PA.

FROM LANCASTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY - REV. RALPH C. LINK.

THIS COMING FRIDAY 9-9 AND SAT. 9-5 - WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP WILL HOLD A GARAGE SALE AT THE REAR OF 303 WALKER AVE. ITEMS ARE NEEDED AND SO IS YOUR SUPPORT. ANY LARGE ITEMS WILL BE PICKED UP - CALL R. KNAYER'S OR DON KENNEDY'S.

THE APARTMENT AT 110 WALKER AVE. IS COMPLETED AND READY TO LEASE - IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED CALL ART SNYDER OR CONTACT THE OFFICE. BOB KNAYER WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE WHO HELPED IN ANY WAY. MRS. MARY YOUNG IS NOW AT SUNNYVIEW HOME. RECOGNITION DINNER - WED. MAY 29TH AT 6:30 P.M.

SMALL
ALL
WORTH

If we apply within own fams, we know we bros, sis 2/ keepers
 While we concentrate thots on fams, come today look at 1 main reason for fams, this children.
 ons, dotters.
 Have looked Mothers & Fathers, now time children (Illustration mother & play pen)
 Reading recently coming back old ways raising kids Author article point out we tried gen, Dr. Spock & his theory of spare rod.
 Most will recall Spock wrote book, advocate no punishment or spank.
 Should talk child, never physical punishment.
 His theory caused some unhealthy situations in Nation. Supposedly author say, he withdrawn theory. Unfortunately, many peop not see his retraction. Always bothers me, sensational news spread front page thruout nation.
 If wrong & need correction, retraction printed in ~~want~~ want-ads or place where need magnify glass where seldom seen.
 Another eminent psychiatrist say, "Children need rules & discipline for emotion health, as much need bread & butter for physical health."
 Another say, "A child's character cannot be shaped by sudden accident."
 (Illustration dead bird in my hand)
 I thot of creation God, entrusted to a dumb creature thot of futility & frustration not to do more thot of many homes where children be raised. How we as parents do not own children, merely loaned (entrusted by God to raise productive peop, we "Keepers", to ed, feed, clothe, develop etc
 This grave respons, sometimes graveness only come after child. on scene
 Some cases this awareness only after almost grown. Sadly, some child must raise selves.
 Needless say, this cause problems. Many times in convers peop outside church, told when child reach certain age free choose ch. or rel. This bad situation say least
 (Illustration J. Edgar Hoover)
 We as parents cannot afford let child choose every If we fed this manner, all cake, ice cream. be then, graveness situation lies.
 This not mean we be complete dictators, but do mean we to be shapers, molders that character God has entrusted to us.

"The Keepers!"
 Text: I Sam. 2:12, & 26
 "the sons of Eli were worthless men; they knew not the Lord.
 And the child Samuel, grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men."
 Text this morn taken 2nd chap. I Sam. 12 & 26 vs. The 2 vs tell 2 diff storys (Read Verses)
 Hannah 1 of 2 wives Elkanah
 Peninnah other wife able bear child, t_aunt Hannah for sterility.
 On yrly trip Temp in Shiloh, Hannah pray in temp. Promise God if son, will dedicate to Lord.
 God herd prayer, gave Sam.
 Sam means, "Name of God," or, "His name is God."
 Took boy temp Shiloh early age, he left with Eli. Eli good man, sons not.
 Took best meat selves, if not given, took by force. Author tell young Sam, "But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child girded with a linen ephod." Which says, he wear priestly garment, act in capacity assistant to priest Eli.
 Sam mother must been good woman, loving.
 We told made little coat each yr, took him when she & Dad at yrly sacrifice.
 Script say, Eli bless Hannah, Elkanah because loan Sam to Lord. She had 3 more son, 2 dotter.
 We read, "And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord and also with men.
 In ancient Israel, word keeper several meaning. Most common, guard over cattlem, sheep.
 Abel keeper of sheep, read 4th chap Gen/
 Cain kill Abel in fit anger.
 God ask cain whereabouts Abel, Cain answer, "I know not: am I my brothers keeper?"
 Thus he say, "Am I guard or shep over brother? Am I expected to look after him & care for him?"
 When we ponder this we realize of course, this saying ded down to us today.
 Peop ask, when question relationship to other peop, "Am I my bros keeper?"

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
 Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
 Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
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Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.